CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR
26 June 1985

COMBATING TERRORISM

Turning world against terrorists

REAGAN tries to bring international pressure to bear on Shiites holding US hostages in Beirut, as nations grapple with new wave of terrorism

By Charlotte Saikowski
Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

Washington

As the world is stirred by a wave of terrorist acts in the past two weeks, many diplomatic and other experts view the events as a temporary contagion. One terrorist act seems to beget another.

But experts caution that, even as the eruptions subside, terrorism will likely continue as a worldwide trend requiring thoughtful action on many fronts. Some of these actions include:

- Nuts-and-bolts measures to heighten security measures at airports, embassies, and other potential targets, as well as better intelligence gathering to help thwart terrorist actions.
- Greater bilateral and international cooperation in providing mechanisms for enforcing existing conventions against terrorism.
- A determined effort of governments everywhere to deal with the political and social frustrations that lead some to resort to terrorism.

Meanwhile, the United States is enlisting the cooperation of other governments in an effort to secure the release of the American hostages in Lebanon. President Reagan, as of this writing Tuesday, was considering steps, including closing Beirut International Airport and cutting off goods and services to the Lebanese capital, to increase pressure on the hijackers.

The White House indicated the President was seeking "international cooperation" in any possible moves. Syria was reported Tuesday to have become involved in the hostage crisis, possibly in an effort to help resolve it.

Administration officials say the US is trying to impress on Lebanon's Shiite community that the hijackers' action may entail a high price in the international community. Many Shiite Muslims do not support taking hostages, and the US hopes that, in the interests of their and Lebanon's future role in the world, they will press Nabih Berri to free the hostages.

Experts differ on the extent to which terrorist acts may or may not be coordinated. But many see the phenomenon as less a global conspiracy than outbursts of violence rooted in specific political and social grievances. Violence is facilitated by easy access to guns and explosives, and encouraged by the power of television and other mass media, experts say.

"One of these acts begets another — monkey see, monkey do," says Robert Hunter, an expert at Georgetown University's Center for Strategic and International Studies. "During the Iranian hostage crisis there also was a rash of other incidents, including burning of the US Embassy in Pakistan."

"It's not just anti-Americanism and it's not some great conspiracy," says a ranking State Department official. "These are a series of eruptions that have definable sources of ferment and social frustration in each place."

Terrorism acts have to be distinguished from one another, says Dr. Hunter. Some are carried out by irrational individuals, some simply for money, and still others for unrealistic causes. It is political terrorism, relating to an often-legitimate political goal, that the US and other countries must address, he says.

The trend toward political violence is evident not only in the Middle East but in myriad other corners of the globe. In many areas, such as Northern Ireland and South Africa, the violence is driven by nationalism and a struggle for political rights. Many ethnic groups — Basques, Croatians, Armenians — also are fighting to redress alleged wrongs.

But today religious fanaticism and fundamentalism are emerging as a major new force — among the Shiites in the Middle East, for instance, and the Sikhs in India.

Figures on terrorism indicate the possibility of controlling it when governments and the public are aroused. Hijackings, for instance, have dramatically diminished in number, from more than 60 during one year in the early 1970s to about 20 a year in recent times. The US itself has been relatively free of terrorism.

Still, worldwide the problem worsens. In 1984 the number of international terrorist incidents was up 30 percent, to more than 600, according to US government figures. The level of terrorism in Western Europe was up by one-third and in the Middle East by two-thirds; it held steady in Latin America. Also, the number of lethal acts increased.

"We are probably going to be faced with a prolonged, historical period of sporadic ... organized violence," says Zbigniew Brzezinski, national-security adviser during the Carter administration. Mr. Brzezinski says this is because wars between states have been largely contained and replaced by other means of warfare, and because of pent-up religious and ethnic animosities.

Experts worry about the growing technological sophistication of terrorist violence, including the potential use of nuclear bombs and chemical and biological

weapons. "There is a quantum leap in the destructive magnitude of terrorism," says Dr. Brzezinski, "and I'm afraid this process may continue."

A conference on nuclear terrorism is under way in Washington this week. Yet, despite longtime concern about such a development, terrorists have not taken this route — largely, experts say, because it could prove self-defeating.

Dealing with terrorism is a growing challenge in any case, and there seem to be two main schools of approach to it. Some specialists see a solution in the use of force against terrorists and a willingness to risk loss of life.

Ray Cline, a former US intelligence official, contends that terrorism is not a situation beyond control but public opinion handicaps efforts to combat it: The public does not take terrorism as seriously as an attack on the US.

"Hijacking is a violation of international law," he says. "Therefore, you're entitled to take police action. The only question is when and how."

The other school of thought stress the need for the US to deal understandingly with forces that propel change, and to put itself on the side of history.

"We need political leadership that thinks in terms of political dynamics," says Harold Saunders, an associate with the American Enterprise Institute and a former diplomat.

"We will not deal with the world to come if we're not more perceptive than we have been about what moves much of the world," he says.

In the future, says Mr. Saunders, there will be more and more players like the Shiites and Iranian mujahideen influencing world events. Under these circumstances, he argues, the old instruments of power and influence, including military power, will not be useful.

"Unless we think about the dynamics of political, social, and economic change and how we relate to it, we will not be influential in this world," he maintains.

Foreign-policy observers attribute some of the growing political violence to anti-Americanism and a loss of US credibility. They believe the administration practices a double standard when it supports the violence of the "contra" rebels in Nicaragua or when it is passive to Israel's violations of international law, which include putting settlements on the West Bank, but is outraged by the hijacking of an American airliner by Shiite militants.

"If the United States were more zealous in requiring adherence to international law, it would be in a far stronger position to deal with terrorist acts and the chances of their taking place would be greatly minimized," says W. T. Mallison, professor of international law at George Washington University.

Louis Rene Beres, a political scientist at Purdue University, echoed the same thought in a speech to the conference on nuclear terrorism. "The United States can't have it both ways," he said. "There is little point to our condemnation of state terrorism against American interests in the Middle East if we support our own terrorists in Central America."